

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (original) A water-soluble thickener comprising a water-soluble copolymer having a weight-average molecular weight of 6,000,000 or higher obtainable by polymerizing a monomer mixture which comprises 2-acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid and/or a salt thereof and acrylic acid and/or a salt thereof as essential components and optionally other copolymerizable monomer components,

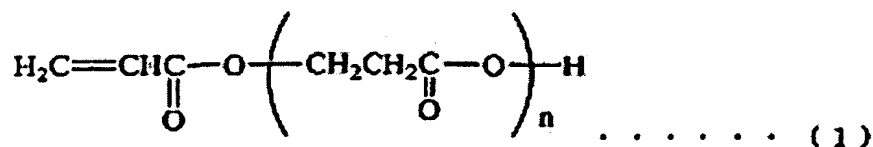
wherein 2-acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid and/or a salt thereof represents 20 mol% or more of all the monomers.

2. (original) The water-soluble thickener according to claim 1,

wherein the monomer mixture comprises 20 to 60 mol% of 2-acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid and/or a salt thereof, 80 to 20 mol% of acrylic acid and/or a salt thereof, and optionally 0 to 20 mol% of the other copolymerizable monomers.

3. (currently amended) The water-soluble thickener according to claim 1 ~~or~~ 2,

wherein the monomer mixture comprises a compound represented by the following formula (1):



(wherein n is an integer of 1 to 12)

and/or a salt thereof as the other copolymerizable monomer components.

4. (currently amended) A liquid acidic detergent consisting of an aqueous solution which comprises a mineral acid and/or an organic acid and the water-soluble thickener according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 3.~~

5. (currently amended) A liquid acidic detergent consisting of an aqueous solution which comprises 3 to 30% by weight of a mineral acid and/or an organic acid and 0.02 to 5% by weight of the water-soluble thickener according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 3.~~

6. (original) A thickening method comprising the step of adding the following water soluble copolymer to an acidic aqueous solution or an acidic emulsion:

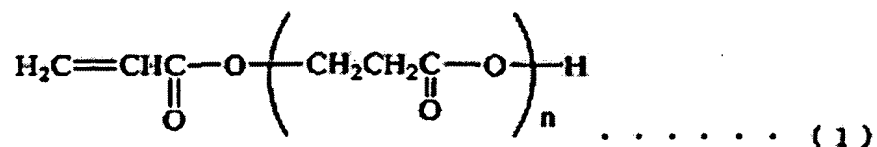
a water-soluble copolymer having a weight-average molecular weight of 6,000,000 or higher obtainable by polymerizing a monomer mixture which comprises 2-acrylamido-2-

methylpropanesulfonic acid and/or a salt thereof and acrylic acid and/or a salt thereof as essential components and optionally other copolymerizable monomer components,

wherein 2-acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid and/or a salt thereof represents 20 mol% or more of all the monomers.

7. (new) The water-soluble thickener according to claim 2,

wherein the monomer mixture comprises a compound represented by the following formula (1):



(wherein n is an integer of 1 to 12)

and/or a salt thereof as the other copolymerizable monomer components.

8. (new) A liquid acidic detergent consisting of an aqueous solution which comprises a mineral acid and/or an organic acid and the water-soluble thickener according to claim 2.

9. (new) A liquid acidic detergent consisting of an aqueous solution which comprises a mineral acid and/or an organic acid and the water-soluble thickener according to claim 3.

10. (new) A liquid acidic detergent consisting of an aqueous solution which comprises a mineral acid and/or an organic acid and the water-soluble thickener according to claim 4.

11. (new) A liquid acidic detergent consisting of an aqueous solution which comprises 3 to 30% by weight of a mineral acid and/or an organic acid and 0.02 to 5% by weight of the water-soluble thickener according to claim 2.

12. (new) A liquid acidic detergent consisting of an aqueous solution which comprises 3 to 30% by weight of a mineral acid and/or an organic acid and 0.02 to 5% by weight of the water-soluble thickener according to claim 3.

13. (new) A liquid acidic detergent consisting of an aqueous solution which comprises 3 to 30% by weight of a mineral acid and/or an organic acid and 0.02 to 5% by weight of the water-soluble thickener according to claim 4.